



## Department of Energy

Pacific Area Support Office

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TO: J. H. Dryden, Director, Pacific Area Support Office

### REPORT OF FALL 1989 MEDICAL TRIP TO THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

#### I. BACKGROUND

I served as the DOE Field Representative for all but the last two days of the BNL Fall medical mission to the Marshall Islands, which took place between September 20 - October 10, 1989.

#### II. DATES

Kwajalein	September 19-20
Mejatto	September 20-23
Utrik	September 24-28
Majuro	September 28-October 6
Ebeye	October 7

#### III. ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVATIONS

##### A. General

It was pleasant and relaxing to participate in an uncomplicated and relatively easy medical mission, for a change. The Fall mission, a brief medical follow-up to the large Spring mission, is generally small, unhurried, and uncrowded, with only two doctors working for short durations at all locations. However, that is not to say the mission was without problems.

We examined a total of one hundred and twenty-eight persons at Mejatto (28), Utrik (60), and Majuro (40), with another thirty-five expected at Ebeye. A key component of the work plan could not be implemented because of failure of our mammography unit on the first day of the mission. Other (non-breast) x-rays were taken with the portable unit so the tech's services were useful.

The BNL specialist recruited for the mission (Dr. Mike Bliss, a gastroenterologist) made a valuable contribution to the RepMar health system by training several doctors and Medex staff on the use of a gastroscope. This new piece of medical equipment at Majuro was not being utilized until Dr. Bliss's appearance. He also directed the performance of three surgeries using the equipment.

BNL Medical 89  
Harry Brown's Files, NV

Dr. Adams also recruited the services of a physical fitness instructor to follow-up on the diabetes prevention work of last Spring by Dr. Bob Wilson. Surprisingly, her work, enthusiasm, and exercise drills were very well received in the outer islands and at Majuro. RepMar has expressed some interest in contracting Ms. Benton to run its own fitness program.

#### B. Mejatto

It rained heavily and was overcast for the three days we remained anchored at this isolated spot in Kwajalein lagoon. Nevertheless, the waters were passable enough for us to work there. It was a blow to have the mammography machine fail us . . . (perhaps a short in the tube). We also lost the use of our uninterruptible power supply, but fortunately had a back-up unit aboard with which to complete the mission.

We did have twenty-five people attend the community meeting. They were enormously pleased with the range of gifts given to the community: coffee, sports equipment, toys, coloring books, used clothing, etc. No questions were asked of us, but they were fairly entertained and excited by the exercise plan and routine of the fitness instructor, Maryanne Benton. She also conducted lower back pain clinics for several interested persons.

Five 177 Health Plan personnel accompanied us to Mejatto, but elected to stay and take their S&Q ashore. We worked closely with them on patients and even provided parts to them for repair of the island dispensary's water pump.

#### C. Utrik

The weather was ideal during the five days at this island. We had seventy-five people attend the community meeting, and again, no questions were asked . . . probably because of the entertaining distraction of our attractive physical fitness instructor! Her activity was very popular and well-attended during our stay. The community gifts were also much appreciated.

The political situation on the island was intriguing. The elected mayor, Harold Matthew, was obliged to resign since he now resides in Ailuk, his new wife's island. Acting Mayor Harris Joel was off-island, so

Bank Lalimo was designated by the Council as Acting. Regular elections will be fifteen months from now. Also, a new principal of the school had been appointed to replace the local principal. The ex-senator was on-island to press flesh. Considerable political dissension and in-fighting seem to be taking place. Fortunately, this should not affect us or our future visits.

We continued to experience problems with AMI. It failed to pickup our party at the negotiated time (11:00 a.m.) for the trip to Majuro. Rather, it informed us the evening preceding the flight, that it could only come for us early the following morning. This could have been very disrupting to our medical schedule on the final day of work had BNL not been able to work late that evening, and to conduct patient home visits early in the morning before the flight.

#### D. Majuro

Work proceeded smoothly at Majuro during the three days of activity. The number of patients and persons aboard the boat were small and manageable. We also saw several referrals from Majuro hospital. There were, however, five persons for referral to the U.S.: four to Hawaii, and one to the NIH (Washington), all males, currently residing in Majuro. (There were no other referrals to US on the trip, including the work at Ebeye.)

Harry Brown visited Majuro during the earlier part of our mission there. We met with the U.S. Charge D' Affaires (Norm Olsen, Acting), Chief Secretary De Brum and the senior staff of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal. The principal focus of our discussions was Rongelap. It is hoped that RepMar will be more active (and less neutral) in mediating the Rongelap situation, especially now that a Radiation Science Advisor has been hired, and an international Advisory Panel is about to be appointed.

The Nuclear Claims Tribunal has its work cut out for it. It is not only struggling with the internal issues of organizing and validating claims (which it must adjudicate later), with comprehending the radiological situation in the Marshall Islands, and with identifying and contacting technical and medical specialists, but it must contend with an intrusive legislative body. A recent RepMar law permitting claimants to appeal NCT

decisions to the M.I. Supreme Court can only dilute the autonomy and intent of the Tribunal. The U.S. apparently views this issue as a local constitutional matter.

I also met with the NCT to review the status of our research for it, to comment, at its request, on its lists of persons already compensated by the U.S. Government, and to join Dr. Adams in his conversations with Judges Piggott and Bird. They asked his assistance in finding a qualified, medical epidemiologist and up to two diagnosticians as consultants. Dr. Adams did discuss his work and findings in the Marshalls and implications for the Tribunal. It was a very stimulating, cordial meeting.

I did have an informal opportunity to meet and talk to Mr. Louis Licht, the Acting Director of the State Department's Office of Freely Associated State Affairs (to which the Majuro and Pohnpei U.S. Embassies report). He was in Majuro for an orientation visit. I briefed him on the background and purpose of our work in the M.I., our organization, and policy planning. I referred him to Harry Brown's office for contact and follow-up.

I was impressed with the activities of Dr. Bliss and Maryanne Benton at Majuro. Dr. Bliss, as forementioned, made a significant contribution to the health system and patients. Ms. Benton conducted three successful exercise classes at the hospital's physical therapy center (notice of which we had translated and announced on the radio).

We did attempt to repair the mammography unit with the assistance of Mr. Ray Meninger, RepMar medical repair specialist. He was unsuccessful, but did confirm that the problem seemed to be a short in the tube.

#### E. Kwajalein/Ebeye

I participated on the first day of the three days of work scheduled for Ebeye. It went routinely well with no major problems. I learned later there were no patients identified for referral to Honolulu.

Incidentally, I talked with Governor Resio Moses of Pohnpei State, FSM, on the aircraft to Honolulu. Gov. Moses is an old acquaintance of mine. I raised with him the possibility of a brief DOE mission to Pohnpei early next summer to collect agricultural plantings for Bikini and perhaps to collect urine from volunteers

living in a contamination-free environment. He indicated his people would welcome a visit from DOE and its vessel and even offered to supply us with agricultural plantings free from his government. His only wish was that we make a stop at Pingelap en route to collect urines and, of course, to put our visit request through FSM diplomatic channels. I assured him that we would do so, if the mission materialized.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. It is important to have the mammography machine repaired as soon as possible. While we are not scheduled to use it again until mid-March, Dr. Adams has indicated that at least six persons from last March's medical trip require a follow-up mammogram. He intends to call them into Kwajalein for Mr. Mizutani to x-ray when the equipment is repaired.
- B. We must continue to protest to AMI about the need to maintain their negotiated charter schedules with us, especially in the case of medical mission support, where we rarely have the option to accommodate to sudden changes. Once medical appointments and "home visits" are scheduled, it is difficult to change them, particularly on the last day of an island visit. I did discuss this incident with ex-manager, Neville Hill, and expect H&N will also remind AMI management of our experiences in its next negotiation session with the airline.
- C. I have asked BNL to expedite the referral of the five patients from Majuro to coincide with Reynold De Brum's stopover in Honolulu on October 30-31, so that he can assist them at Straub Hospital. Helmer Emos, no doubt, will be asked by BNL to accompany the one patient to NIH. It might also make sense for H&N to have Capelle De Brum personally escort the group from Majuro so that he can be shown by H&N and Reynold how to coordinate and support patients in Honolulu. It would be a good training opportunity for him.
- D. It is clear that a significant meeting is being planned between the DOE and the Nuclear Claims Tribunal to discuss the parameters, costs, and requirements of a NCT-sponsored radiological survey in the Marshall Islands. The newly hired MI Radiation Science Advisor and international panel of advisors will also attend. I recommend that we offer the use of the PASO conference room for the meeting, which will likely take place within the first half of December.

E. We experienced continual problems on the mission with unclean (water-contaminated) mogas. The small boat engines stopped several times, once outside Utrik lagoon, and were difficult to restart. Such critical engine failure is potentially hazardous. Moreover, the gas was stored in used metal drums, less desirable than plastic drums. H&N should investigate and ensure gasoline on future missions will remain contamination free.

Original Signed By:  
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OP-295:WDJ

cc: Linda Smith, AMA  
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H&N/PO